

Office of Instruction Update

September 8, 2008

Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, September 9 BOE Study Session
- Tuesday/Wednesday September 9/10 Heritage Heights Open Houses
- Wednesday, September 10 Teacher Center Policy Board Meeting
- Thursday, September 11 PDP Meeting
- Friday, September 12 Middle School Welcome Back Picnic
- Saturday, September 13 Maplemere Welcome Back Picnic
- Tuesday, September 16 BOE Voting Meeting
- Wednesday, September 17th High School Open House

Think About the Week Ahead....

- *What exactly will you ask each of your students to produce?*
- *How much thinking will it involve?*
- *How will the kids know exactly what is expected?*

- Thursday, September 18th Thoughtful Education Introduction Face to Face Meeting
- Friday, September 19th Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony
- Friday, September 19th Glendale Picnic/ Open House
- Saturday, September 20th: Homecoming/ Community Day Carnival

Notes and Reflections.....Taking a Look Around the District....

District-wide.... This year, we will be engaged in several district-wide projects/ initiatives.

1. **APPR Pilot-** Each building will seek volunteers to pilot the APPR revisions recommended from the District Professional Development Plan committee. See your building principal if you are interested in learning more.
2. **District Core Reading Program.** We'll be looking to adopt a District-wide core reading program for 2009-10. See the Elementary segment for more information.
3. **Unit Redesign-** We'll be asking all our teacher teams to "re-design" at least one unit of study to include deep engagement capable of fostering deep understanding and critical thinking. This process will ask teams to do a form of "before and after" to bring greater thought and rigor to the instruction and student production.

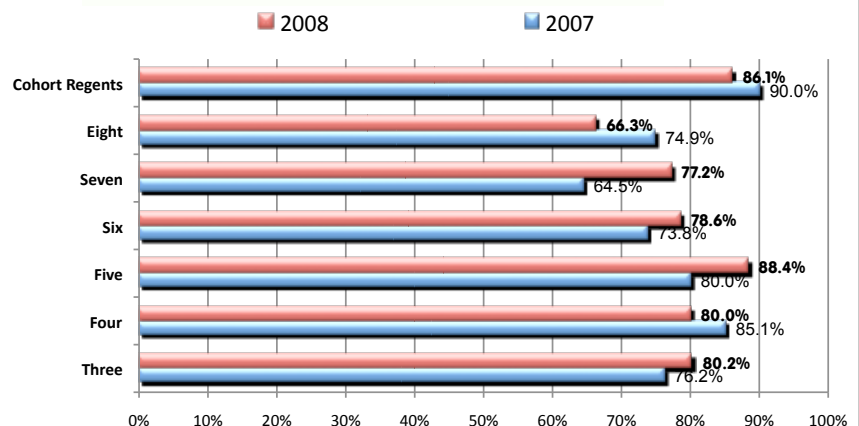
High School... Over the summer, the High School continued its effort to develop a common mission and vision for its staff and students. After developing a set of "learning truths" last June, a team of teachers and administrators met on August 8th to develop a mission statement for the building.

We, the professionals of Sweet Home High School, serve a diverse community of learners, including students, families, and each other. Through meaningful experiences, we instill a passion for learning and develop empowered citizens ready to face our global society's emerging challenges.

When our mission is fulfilled...

- Sweet Home High School students will be innovative, resilient problem solvers who understand their roles in improving the human condition in an ever-changing global society.
- Sweet Home High School teachers will learn, internalize, and model the habits of mind we work to develop in our students.
- Sweet Home High School professionals will collaborate with parents and guardians in the education, career development, service learning and wellness of our students.

Data Dashboard: ELA Proficiency



- *Sweet Home High School culture will reflect the attitudes of a diverse, interdependent community, where its members are respectful, supportive, energetic and engaged.*

The High School team is to be commended for following the necessary steps to become a true learning community. The next steps include developing consistent curriculum and “cornerstone tasks.” It will be interesting work to continue watching.

Middle School.... This September marked the beginning of “Second Instruction” in the Middle School. This period for seventh and eighth grade students has been designed to differentiate ELA and Math instruction by readiness. At-risk students in ELA and Math will receive a full second period of instruction designed to quickly address and close gaps. Students at grade level will receive rigorous supplementary instruction in Science and Social Studies that requires daily writing and thinking. Students excelling in Math and ELA will receive extra doses with challenging advanced content and great rigor. By meeting students where they are, the hope is to boost all students ahead from where they started.

Elementary... We are in the process of piloting and studying two core reading programs for district-wide adoption in 2009-10. Harcourt’s Storytown and Scott-Foresman’s Reading Street are highly recommended programs that will help us bring greater curricular consistency to our district elementary literacy program. We will have a task force that includes teachers and administrators to make a recommendation to the Board of Education for District adoption. Look for more information on this project soon.

Our Mission..... Like many of you, Geoff’s opening day message certainly made quite an impression on me. Woven within the great stories of kids and the teachers that made a difference was a message of high levels of learning for all our students and the concept of proficiency for all.

Proficiency doesn’t mean “passing the test” or scoring three or four. It means being very well prepared- the ability to perform in many different settings or contexts. As we continue our work, we have to recognize that simply passing tests won’t be enough. Our kids will need to be “proficient.” To this end, we will need to increase our expectations for kids as well as for ourselves:

- **Deep understanding of content.** Kids will need to make connections that link discrete pieces of knowledge together around big concepts and ideas. It is only this level of understanding that allows transfer of knowledge to new settings. Teaching for transfer requires recognizing the big ideas and explicitly teaching to help kids make those connections.

- **Critical Thinking Skills** The world our kids are graduating into (and even more so in the future) will require them to think critically. This will require us to add critical thinking and reasoning into all our curriculums. We will need to immerse kids in critical thinking to help them make connections. But we’ll also need to explicitly teach kids HOW TO think as well. Four critical reasoning skills that each of us needs to teach kids are comparison, inductive learning, summarizing and decision making.

- **Habits of Mind** Success in the world beyond school requires attitudes and dispositions that will carry kids when things get tough; when they don’t know. We have to identify a small number of habits that we can target both during instruction but also account for in our tasks and assessments.

During the past five years, we have worked on several of these ideas and strategies in isolation. The next best step is to work to integrate them together in the form of unit “re-designs.” We’ll be asking you to reexamine a unit that you already teach and seek to take a second look at it. The goal of this “second look” is to have students produce original product indicative of the kind of thinking and engagement we seek. We’ll ask you to look at perhaps one or two habits of mind. We’ll ask you to include proven techniques to get kids thinking and more deeply engaged. We’ll ask you to explicitly teach one critical reasoning skill. We’ll ask you to consider the unit’s overall ability to produce high quality, rigorous work.

